

I L L U S T R A T E D  
**Weekly Bible Notes**  
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For study the week of **May 28 – June 3, 2012**

*A weekly compilation of biblical commentary & research for your Bible study*

**Table of Contents**

Vol. 35, Number 23

(Online users: click on page number to be taken DIRECTLY to notes on that Chapter)

ACTS 1:1,2 (9)..... 2  
 ACTS 2:1,4,5,7,8,11,38,41,47 (10) ..... 2  
 ACTS 3:1-8 (12) ..... 4  
 ACTS 5:12,16 (13) ..... 5  
 ACTS 6:1-7 (15) ..... 6  
 ACTS 19:1,8,11,13-17,19,20 (16) ..... 7  
 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 (14) ..... 9  
 1 CORINTHIANS 14:12 (19) ..... 10  
 DEUTERONOMY 4:39 (3) ..... 10  
 ECCLESIASTES 12:10 (7) ..... 10  
 EPHESIANS 2:19-22 (21) ..... 10  
 EPHESIANS 4:7,11-13 (20) ..... 11  
 EPHESIANS 6:10,13 (17) ..... 12  
 EZEKIEL 36:28,38 (R) ..... 13  
 EZEKIEL 37:26 (R) ..... 13  
 ISAIAH 45:5,6,8,12,13,18 (RR) ..... 13  
 JAMES 5:14 (11) ..... 14  
 JOB 32:8 (8) ..... 15  
 MATTHEW 9:35 (5) ..... 15  
 MATTHEW 16:13-18 (6) ..... 15  
 PSALM 27:5 (2) ..... 16  
 PSALM 77:13 (G) ..... 17  
 PSALM 96:1,3,4,5,6 (1) ..... 17  
 PSALM 133:1 (18) ..... 18  
 PSALM 150:1,2 (4) ..... 18



Illustration above from *Treasures of the Bible* by Henry Davenport Northrop, D.D

*“As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life.”*  
 — Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* p. 497

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**Acts 1:1,2** ([online tools](#)) (9)

**1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,**

(*Amplified Bible*) IN THE former account [which I prepared], O Theophilus, I made [a continuous report] dealing with all the things which Jesus began to do and to teach

PRONUNCIATION: “Theophilus (thee-of’ uh-luhs) ‘lover of God’ or ‘friend of God’.” (*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary (HBD)*) [Audio»](#)

“Luke begins with a mention of his ‘first book.’ He says it dealt with the deeds and teachings of Jesus up to the Ascension. This is a very brief but good summary of Luke’s Gospel....Theophilus means ‘lover of God’ or ‘loved by God,’ and therefore some have thought that Luke-Acts is dedicated to all Christians. However, Theophilus was a real name, widely used in Luke’s day among Greeks and Greek-speaking Jews. Moreover, ancient writers usually dedicated their books to definite individuals, even though they were writing for the general public. This means that Theophilus was probably a real person.” (*The Layman’s Bible Commentary (LBC)*, p19)

**2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:**

(*Amplified Bible*) Until the day when He ascended, after He through the Holy Spirit had instructed and commanded the apostles (special messengers) whom He had chosen.

“Verse 2 introduces the apostles. Later Luke identifies them by name, but here he identifies them only in relationship to Jesus. The Greek is ambiguous, leaving it unclear whether ‘through the Holy Spirit’ describes Jesus’ instruction of the apostles or his selection of them. Luke’s emphasis on the role of the Spirit is such that this ambiguity need not be resolved, since neither action would take place apart from the Spirit’s presence.” (*Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (ANTC)*, p63) [▶](#)

**Acts 2:1,4,5,7,8,11,38,41,47** ([online tools](#)) (10)

**1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.**

(*New Living Translation*) On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus’ resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place.

PRONUNCIATION: “Pentecost (pen’ ti kôst’), n. 1. a Christian festival celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles; Whitsunday,” (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (RAND)*). [Audio»](#)

“Pentecost has often been referred to as ‘the birth of the church.’ A significant parallel between Pentecost and the Lukan infancy narrative is the prominent role of the Spirit in both.” (*The New American Commentary (NAC)*)

“Pentecost...took place fifty days after Passover. ‘All’ are present, with nothing in the preceding context to indicate that the ‘all’ should be understood as any other than the 120 or so, indicated in [Acts] 1:15. Without further detail we should presumably understand the ‘one place’ where they were gathered to be the upper room of [Acts] 1:13.” (*Epworth Commentaries (EPW)*, p24)

**4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

(*Amplified Bible*) And they were all filled (diffused throughout their souls) with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other (different, foreign) languages (tongues), as the Spirit kept giving them clear and loud expression [in each tongue in appropriate words].

(*Good News Translation*) They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

(*The Message*) and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

ILLUSTRATION: “They appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,” Paul Hardy, [Image»](#)

“The effect of the miraculous occurrence was an internal one in that the disciples were **all filled with the Holy Spirit**. No one was excluded, they **all** received the same gift. This gift manifested itself externally in that all **began to speak in other tongues**. Note the play on words: **tongues as of fire** are related to **other tongues**....This first outpouring of the Spirit upon the church is unique not only because of the theophany motifs which accompanied it but also because of the language miracle in which it manifested itself. ...Luke assumed that the disciples spoke in a multitude of languages.” (*Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (ACNT), p75-6)

**5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Now there were then residing in Jerusalem Jews, devout and God-fearing men from every country under heaven.

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) Now there were staying in Jerusalem Jews of deep faith from every nation of the world.

“**Men from every nation:** Pentecost, because of its occurrence at a more propitious time of the year for travel, induced bigger numbers of Jews from all over the world to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem than Passover itself. It was also customary for many pious Jews who had spent their lives abroad to return to end their days as close to the Temple as possible.” (*New Century Bible Commentary* (NCB), p73)

**7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?**

(*New Living Translation*) They were beside themselves with wonder. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee,

“Galileans had difficulty pronouncing gutturals and had the habit of swallowing syllables when speaking; so they were looked down upon by the people of Jerusalem as being provincial. Therefore, since the disciples who were speaking were Galileans, it bewildered those who heard because the disciples could not by themselves have learned so many different languages.” (*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (EBC), p272)

**8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?**

(*Amplified Bible*) Then how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own (particular) dialect to which we were born?

“The people who heard the sounds on this occasion, however, were not Gentiles but Jews and proselytes; the evangelization of Gentiles was a revolutionary development recorded with a fanfare of trumpets, at a later stage in the narrative of Acts. Yet those ‘devout’ visitors are apparently considered by Luke to be representatives of the various lands from which they had come, and of the local dialects of those lands.” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (NICNT), p55)

**11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Cretans and Arabians too--we all hear them speaking in our own native tongues [and telling of] the mighty works of God!

“The crowd notes what it is hearing. These Galileans speak of ‘the mighty deeds of God’. The term appears only here in the NT but is frequent in the LXX. Thus the tongues lead to a declaration of what God has done through Jesus. The passage is conceptually like Luke 19:37-38, where the miracles of God through Jesus are praised.” (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (BECNT), p104)

**38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

(*Amplified Bible*) And Peter answered them, Repent (change your views and purpose to accept the will of God in your inner selves instead of rejecting it) and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of and release from your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“**Repent...every one of you** – literally, ‘Change your mind,’ but in biblical usage this implies a change in one’s whole style of life – and **be baptized...in the name of Jesus**. Baptism was the sign of repentance and (on God’s part) of the forgiveness of sins...The rite of baptism was administered **in the name** of Jesus Christ, where **in** represents the Greek preposition *epi*, ‘upon’ and **the name** means ‘the person.’ That is to say, Jesus Christ and faith in him were the basis upon which this baptism was offered and the promise attached to it was made.” (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p53-4)


**41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) Then those who welcomed his message were baptised, and on that day alone about three thousand souls were added to the number of disciples.

“Luke records that on that birthday of the church, the first Christian Pentecost, ‘about three thousand persons were added’ to the community. Peter must have delivered a powerful sermon indeed! For a church to grow from twelve to three thousand in just a few days surely breaks all records for evangelism! It is difficult to know whether or not Luke is exaggerating here. ...These masses streaming in to the church are a sure sign that God’s blessing is with this movement.” (*Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)*, p46)

- 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Constantly praising God and being in favor and goodwill with all the people; and the Lord kept adding [to their number] daily those who were being saved [from spiritual death].

“A final comment notes that the evangelistic activity of the church continued daily. As the Christians were seen and heard by the other people in Jerusalem, their activities formed an opportunity for witness. Once again Luke refers to the process of becoming a Christian as *being saved*, i.e. from belonging to the sinful people around who were under God’s judgment for their rejection of the Messiah.” (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC)*, p86) 

**Acts 3:1-8** ([online tools](#)) (12)

- 1 **Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.**

(*Amplified Bible*) NOW PETER and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour (three o'clock in the afternoon),

“The Jewish day began at 6 o’clock in the morning and ended at 6 o’clock in the evening. For the devout Jew there were three special hours of prayer – 9 a.m., 12 midday and 3 p.m. They agreed that prayer was efficacious wherever it was offered; but they felt that it was doubly precious when offered in the Temple courts. It is very interesting that the apostles kept up the customs in which they had been trained. It was the hour of prayer and Peter and John were going into the Temple to observe it. A new faith had come to them but they did not use that as an excuse for a license which broke all law. They were aware that the new faith and the old discipline could walk hand in hand.” (*The Daily Study Bible (DSB)*, p32)

- 2 **And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;**

(*Amplified Bible*) [When] a certain man crippled from his birth was being carried along, who was laid each day at that gate of the temple [which is] called Beautiful, so that he might beg for charitable gifts from those who entered the temple.

ILLUSTRATION: “Healing the cripple,” Mattais Scheits, 1672, [Image»](#)

“Going up to the temple, the apostles met a beggar, ‘a man lame from birth’. The temple was a natural gathering place for beggars, since almsgiving was regarded as a religious act incumbent on the pious. The man lay at ‘the gate...called Beautiful,’ which is identified either as the Shushan Gate in the eastern wall of the whole temple complex or with the Nicanor Gate to the east of the temple proper.” (*Continental Commentaries (CC)*, p72)

- 3 **Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.**

(*Amplified Bible*) So when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them to give him a gift.

“*About to go* is expressed in Greek by a participle and infinitive, the first of which has no equivalent in English, the verb denoting merely the idea of futurity, *to be about to do* the act expressed by the dependent verb...*Asked*, in the original, is *asked to receive*....*An alms* has been regarded by certain hypercritics as a...blunder. The final letter is not here the sign of the plural number, but one of the consonants of the Greek word of which the English is a mere corruption, like *palsy* of *paralysis*.” (Alexander, JA, Acts, *Geneva Series of Commentaries*, Avon, Great Britain: The Bath Press, reprinted 1991, p100-1)

- 4 **And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.**

(*Amplified Bible*) And Peter directed his gaze intently at him, and so did John, and said, Look at us!

“Luke makes much in this story of Peter’s eye contact. Why does Peter ‘look intently’ at the lame man and command him to ‘look at us,’ which naturally compels the man to ‘fix his attention’ on the apostles? The demonstration of divine mercy is always a personal concern: Peter’s line of sight is set squarely upon a particular individual whose brokenness is in need of repair.” (*The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB)*, p78)

- 5 **And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) The man looked at them expectantly, hoping that they would give him something.

“And he does. ‘He began to give heed to them,’ but only in the same way as any man might do when his attention is thus aroused. So little was the thought of faith of any kind in his mind that he supposed only that something would now be given to him, something more than the ordinary small coins he usually received. This is one of a number of plain cases in which faith does not and is not intended to precede but rather follows the miracle.” (*Commentary on the New Testament* (LENSKI), p127)

**6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**

(*Amplified Bible*) But Peter said, Silver and gold (money) I do not have; but what I do have, that I give to you: in [the use of] the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!

“At first Peter disappoints the beggar by declaring his lack of money. This serves only to heighten the value of the great gift he does offer: complete health. But it is *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* that it must be given. A name is an expression of a person’s very essence. The power of the person is present and available in the name. In the case of Jesus, the invocation of his name is a direct link between earth and heaven. It is not a magic formula but a simple recognition that if any salvation blessings are to come, they must arrive in and through the person of Jesus Christ.” (*The IVP New Testament Series* (IVP), p64-5)

**7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Then he took hold of the man’s right hand with a firm grip and raised him up. And at once his feet and ankle bones became strong and steady,

“He took hold of his hand. To take hold of the hand in such a case was an offer of aid, an indication that Peter was sincere, and was an inducement to him to make an effort. This may be employed as a beautiful illustration of the manner of God when he commands men to repent and believe. He does not leave them alone; he extends help, and aids their efforts. If they tremble, and feel that they are weak, and needy, and helpless, his hand is stretched out and his power exerted to impart strength and grace.” (*Notes on the Old and the New Testaments* (BARNES), p62)

**8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.**

(*New Living Translation*) He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

“Luke emphasizes the fact that the man not only stands and walks – he *leaps*, a detail mentioned *twice* in verse 8. This stress on leaping recalls the only other place where the Bible mentions the lame leaping, Isaiah 35:6: ‘Then will the lame leap like a stag.’ Now it becomes clear why Luke chooses precisely this healing as the one to highlight in the context of his description of the birth of the church. Isaiah 35:5-6 is a prophetic description of the restoration of Israel, now understood as fulfilled in the Jerusalem messianic community.” (Hamm, Dennis, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Collegeville Commentary*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005, p24) ▶

**Acts 5:12,16** ([online tools](#))<sup>(13)</sup>

**12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;** (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.

(*Amplified Bible*) Now by the hands of the apostles (special messengers) numerous and startling signs and wonders were being performed among the people. And by common consent they all met together [at the temple] in the covered porch (walk) called Solomon’s.

“In fulfillment of the congregation’s prayerful expectation, the church’s mission continues to advance through the apostles’ performance of *signs and wonders*. These miracles not only validate the apostles’ message and are tokens of the fullness of salvation blessings to be had in the kingdom at the end, but they also become a means of liberation from official Judaism, just as Moses’ signs and wonders worked liberation from Egypt.” (*The IVP New Testament Series* (IVP))

“This transitional summary of the community’s life provides further evidence of God’s presence with the community. It also explains why the temple authorities take action against the apostles in the scene that follows. The passage portrays the community not only restored following the crisis of Ananias and Sapphira but even strengthened. The opening statement of verse 12 recalls the ‘wonders and signs’ of [Acts] 2:43. The apostles gather in Solomon’s Portico, the location of Peter’s earlier speech.” (*Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (ANTC), p104)

**16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.**

*(Amplified Bible)* And the people gathered also from the towns and hamlets around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those troubled with foul spirits, and they were all cured.

“People who heard what Jesus was doing came to Jesus from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and areas across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. The Gospel writers speak of crowds of people coming to Jesus to hear him and of the sick who desired to touch him. Now the apostles see the same thing happening to them, when crowds come from the countryside with relatives and friends who are ill...Luke reports that people bring not only the sick to the apostles but also those who were tormented by evil spirits...Luke concludes his summary by stating that the sick and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were all healed.” (*New Testament Commentary (NTC)*, p194-5) [▶](#)

**Acts 6:1-7** ([online tools](#)) <sup>(15)</sup>

**1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

*(Amplified Bible)* NOW ABOUT this time, when the number of the disciples was greatly increasing, complaint was made by the Hellenists (the Greek-speaking Jews) against the [native] Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked and neglected in the daily ministration (distribution of relief).

“The church of Jerusalem, we are now told, comprised both ‘Hebrews’ and ‘Hellenists.’ The main distinction between the two groups was probably linguistic: the Hellenists were Jews whose habitual language was Greek and who attended Greek-speaking synagogues; the Hebrews spoke Aramaic and attended synagogues where the service was conducted in Hebrew ...In the Jewish world as a whole there were tensions between them, and some of these tensions endured between members of the two groups who had joined the ‘disciples’...It was over a practical issue, and not over a matter of theological importance, that disagreement became acute. As daily allocations were made to poorer members of the community from the common fund to which the wealthier members had contributed their property, complaints began to arise that one group was being favored at the expense of the other.” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)*, p120)

**2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.**

*(Amplified Bible)* So the Twelve [apostles] convened the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not seemly or desirable or right that we should have to give up or neglect [preaching] the Word of God in order to attend to serving at tables and superintending the distribution of food.

*(JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English)* The twelve summoned the whole body of the disciples together and said, "It is not right that we should have to neglect preaching the Word of God in order to look after the accounts.

“The sense...here is that of a deliberative body rather than a loose assemblage. Luke may even be thinking of a representative group rather than the entire community of believers. For all the prophetic authority of the Twelve, it is striking that on such critical decisions the discernment of the community is invited. *To abandon...is not acceptable*: The verb is strong: to ‘leave behind,’ or ‘forsake.’ The pressures of community growth and the needs of the poor outstrip the administrative capacity of the Twelve; a distribution of roles is required. The issue is not a moral one but rather of what is ‘fitting’ or ‘appropriate’.” (*Sacra Pagina (SP)*, p106)

**3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.**

*(JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English)* You, our brothers, must look round and pick out from your number seven men of good reputation who are both practical and spiritually-minded and we will put them in charge of this matter.

“The community is to select the candidates, but the commission of them rests with the apostles ...The criteria for the choice of the Seven are different from those for the reconstitution of the Twelve in [Acts] 1:21-22. The Seven must be men of whom one speaks well, filled with spirit and with wisdom so that they can carry out the task with discernment and respect. Why seven are chosen is anyone’s guess; it is not necessarily an imitation of Jewish institution,...” (*The Anchor Bible (AB)*, p349)

**4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

*(JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English)* Then we shall devote ourselves whole-heartedly to prayer and the ministry of the Word."

“The apostolic vocation is here defined as devotion ‘to prayer and to serving the word’. Luke uses ‘word’ as a catchword for the full range of the prophet’s tasks – the keen interpretation of Scripture, the persuasive proclamation of the gospel, and the performance of the Spirit’s ‘signs and wonders’ that provide the eschatological setting for biblical interpretation and evangelistic preaching according to Acts. The petition of apostolic prayers seeks greater power from God to make certain these various prophetic tasks will be boldly and effectively executed.” (*The New Interpreter’s Bible* (NIB), p113)

**5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:**

(*Amplified Bible*) And the suggestion pleased the whole assembly, and they selected Stephen, a man full of faith (a strong and welcome belief that Jesus is the Messiah) and full of and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte (convert) from Antioch.

PRONUNCIATIONS: “Prochorus (prok’uh-ruhs) [Audio»](#), Nicanor (nī-kay’nuhr) [Audio»](#), Timon (tī’muhn) [Audio»](#), Parmenas (pah’r-muh-nuhs) [Audio»](#).” (*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (HBD)).

“Stephen’s place in the early church was clearly very important, for the author devotes much space to him. His influence went far beyond the distribution of charity. He worked *great miracles and signs among the people* and spoke with *inspired wisdom*. Stephen’s activity, his trial and his martyrdom led to the spread of the church among the Gentiles and paved the way for Paul.” (*The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* (CBC))

“Stephen must have been an outstanding person because Luke mentions six features of his character and ministry in 6:5-10. (1) He was ‘a man full of faith’. As David Williams points out, ‘His faith was not different in kind from the faith that all Christians have, but exceptional in the extent to which he was willing to trust Christ, take him at his word and to risk all for Christ’s sake....’(2) He was ‘full...of the Holy Spirit’....Possibly there were some like, Stephen and Barnabas, who so exhibited the power of the Spirit that when people observed them, they were struck by this fact, and it is thus given special mention.” (*The NIV Application Commentary* (NIVAC), p244)

**6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) They brought these men before the apostles, and they, after prayer, laid their hands upon them.

ILLUSTRATION: “The consecration of Stephen,” Vittore Carpaccio, 1511. [Image»](#)

“The Seven came forward, and the Twelve prayed and then laid hands on them. This should probably be seen as an act of commissioning for the task and so a conveying of authority not a formal rite of ordination, which came later in church history. There are echoes of the stories about the choice of Joshua as Moses’ successor by laying on of hands....Luke is going to portray them as the bridge figures leading to the next stage of mission and witness, in this case outside of Jerusalem but still in the Holy Land.” (*Witherington, Ben, III, The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 1998, p251)

**7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

(*Amplified Bible*) And the message of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem; and [besides] a large number of the priests were obedient to the faith [in Jesus as the Messiah, through Whom is obtained eternal salvation in the kingdom of God].

(*New Living Translation*) God’s message was preached in ever-widening circles. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

“Verse 7 offers a mini-summary, affirming that what has just transpired has the blessing of God. The word of God, that is, the message of the gospel, is increasing, and even more disciples are being added to the ranks. Given that increased numbers likely created the problems that led to the appointment of the seven in the first place, the resulting increase of disciples assures readers that things are now under control. Curiously, the narrator adds that many priests also joined the movement and were ‘obedient to the faith,’ that is, the gospel message.” (*Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary* (S&HBC), p106) [▶](#)

**Acts 19:1,8,11,13-17,19,20** ([online tools](#)) <sup>(16)</sup>

**1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,**

(*Amplified Bible*) WHILE APOLLOS was in Corinth, Paul went through the upper inland districts and came down to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.

MAP: “Ephesus,” [BibleAtlas.org](http://BibleAtlas.org)»

“Paul went across the high ground west of Pisidian Antioch instead of along the lower main road through Colossae and Laodicea. **Ephesus** was commonly styled ‘the Light of Asia.’ It was the seat of the Roman proconsul and also of the confederation of cities known as the ‘Asiarchate.’ The imperial spirit was fostered by the worship of the emperor, and the ‘Asiarch’ was the provincial high priest of the imperial cult....[Ephesus’] principal glory was the temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.” (*The Interpreter’s Bible (IB)*, p352)

**8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) Then Paul made his way into the synagogue there and for three months he spoke with the utmost confidence, using both argument and persuasion as he talked of the kingdom of God.

“Paul’s mission to Ephesus follows the pattern of other cities where he worked. After a series of discussions in the synagogue, he is met with resistance, and he leaves the synagogue taking new Christians with him. Often Paul is quickly forced to leave town. This time, however, Paul was able to pursue his missionary work for an exceptionally long time – two years and three months.” (*Westminster Bible Companion (WC)*, p177)

**11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:**

(*Amplified Bible*) And God did unusual and extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,

“Luke placed two summaries back to back. Paul’s ministry of the word is followed by a summary of his extraordinary deeds of power in Ephesus. Word and deed were integral parts of the public ministry of Jesus and of his messengers. The work of preaching and healing begun by Jesus in Galilee was continued by Peter in Jerusalem and Philip in Samaria and was extended by Paul to Jews and Gentiles beyond the Holy Land. This summary not only indicates a Paul-Peter parallel. It also introduces the following episode, dealing with syncretistic magic outside and inside the church.” (*Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (ACNT)*, p361)

**13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) But there were some itinerant Jewish exorcists who attempted to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus when dealing with those who had evil spirits. They would say, "I command you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches."

“Magic exerted a powerful attraction in the ancient world, and the magic of Ephesus was especially well known. Books containing magic formulas were called ‘Ephesian Letters.’ Paul encountered some ‘itinerant Jewish exorcists’ in Ephesus who tried to use Jesus’ name to overpower demons. Jewish names played a prominent role in magical practices, and the use of the name of Jesus in exorcisms is evidenced by ancient magical papyri as well as by the New Testament.” (*Continental Commentaries (CC)*, p287)

**14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Seven sons of a certain Jewish chief priest named Sceva were doing this.

PRONUNCIATION: “Sceva (see’vuh),” (*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary (HBD)*).

“**Sceva**: whoever he was, he was not a Jewish high priest who had held office in Jerusalem, since their names are all known; nor is it likely that he even belonged to a high-priestly family. It is possible that he may have been a self-styled ‘high priest’ of one of the innumerable pagan cults, who found that it paid him to pass himself off as a Jew. Or the **seven sons** may have invented their distinguished parent, and could therefore claim to know the unutterable name of the God of the Hebrews.” (*New Century Bible Commentary (NCB)*, p205)

**15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) But [one] evil spirit retorted, Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?

“It was not the ineffable name, however, but the name of Jesus that Sceva’s sons employed in their attempt to imitate Paul’s exorcizing ministry. But when they tried to use it, like an unfamiliar weapon wrongly handled, it exploded in their hands. ‘That Jesus whom Paul proclaims’ was a name well known to the demon that they were trying to cast out, but what right had they to use it?” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)*, p368-9)

**16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.**

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) And the man in whom the evil spirit was living sprang at



them and over-powered them all with such violence that they rushed out of that house wounded, with their clothes torn off their backs.

“From the mouth of a demon we learn the valuable lesson that Jesus will not allow his name to be reduced to a magical formula. Only those with a personal relationship with Christ and who invoke his name in humble faith are in the correct position to see God act to drive out demons. The evil spirit’s mastery of the sorcerers now turns physical. Galvanized by superhuman strength, the demon-possessed man pounces on them and overpowers them. They receive such a beating that they barely escape with their lives. The magicians, powerless to command the demon, are defenseless against this assault.” (*The IVP New Testament Series (IVP)*, p277)

**17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.**

(*Amplified Bible*) This became known to all who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, and alarm and terror fell upon them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled and magnified.

“News of what had happened soon got about, with two results: first, **the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus...were all seized with fear**. This reaction is only to be expected of people gripped by superstition. The **all** of this verse again is equivalent to ‘many’. And second **the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor**. It is characteristic of Luke that he should note both reactions. Both were entirely natural under the circumstances and should not be dismissed as due merely to the ‘form’ of such stories. The second reaction would not have been as widespread as the first, but was apparently the more enduring...” (*New International Bible Commentary (NIBC)*, p334)

**19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men:** and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

(*Amplified Bible*) And many of those who had practiced curious, magical arts collected their books and [throwing them, book after book, on the pile] burned them in the sight of everybody. When they counted the value of them, they found it amounted to 50,000 pieces of silver (about \$9,300).

ILLUSTRATION: “St. Paul and the burning of pagan books at Ephesus,” Lucio Massari, [Image»](#)

“The demonstration of the futility of pagan attempts to master evil spirits led many of Paul’s Ephesian converts to realize that the pagan magic to which they were still attached was both useless and sinful. They therefore brought the various magical handbooks and compilations of invocations and formulae to which they were still clinging and made a final break with them by publicly burning them....On this high note Luke ends the account of Paul’s successful ministry in Ephesus, although the story of what happened in Ephesus is not yet complete.” (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC)*, p312)

**20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Thus the Word of the Lord [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God] grew and spread and intensified, prevailing mightily.

(*Ferrar Fenton Bible*) Thus the message of the Lord increased and excelled in power.

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) In this way the Word of the Lord continued to grow irresistibly in power and influence.

“Luke offers another statement summarizing the success of the gospel. Verse 20 can be translated two ways. The NRSV offers one possible translation. One could also translate the words, ‘So with the power of the Lord the word grew and prevailed.’ Each testifies to the gospel’s efficacy in the city of Ephesus.” (*Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (S&HBC)*, p348) ►

**1 Corinthians 1:9** ([online tools](#)) <sup>(14)</sup>

**9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

(*Amplified Bible*) God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on); by Him you were called into companionship and participation with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) God is utterly dependable, and it is he who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

“Paul goes back to beginnings. This faithful God has *called* the Corinthian Christians *unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*. The opening words of this Epistle reminded us that Paul’s position as an apostle was due to the divine call. Now we see that there is a call to every believer. It is because God has called him and not because of his own initiative that he has become a Christian....Here it is possible that Paul means that the fellowship is a

common partaking of Christ. But the genitive of a person is more likely to be subjective, with the meaning ‘fellowship with Christ’.” (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (TNTC), p38) ►

**1 Corinthians 14:12** ([online tools](#))<sup>(19)</sup>

**12** Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, **seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.**

(*Amplified Bible*) So it is with yourselves; since you are so eager and ambitious to possess spiritual endowments and manifestations of the [Holy] Spirit, [concentrate on] striving to excel and to abound [in them] in ways that will build up the church.

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) So, with yourselves, since you are so eager to possess spiritual gifts, concentrate your ambition upon receiving those which make for the real growth of your church.

“Paul...redirects the energies of the Corinthians and calls for them to excel in edification – **gifts that build up the church** – as the genuine manifestation of the Spirit alive and at work among them. He reiterates his earlier point that the Corinthians are to seek the preeminent gifts, not merely the flamboyant or unusual ones. While Paul’s point is clear, his grammar and style are not. This sentence could mean either ‘Seek spiritual gifts that edify the church in order to excel’ or ‘Seek to excel in the spiritual gifts that edify the church.’” (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p285) ►

**Deuteronomy 4:39** ([online tools](#))<sup>(3)</sup>

**39** **Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Know, recognize, and understand therefore this day and turn your [mind and] heart to it that the Lord is God in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath; there is no other.

*Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, James D.G. **Dunn**, general editor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), gives the setting: “Deuteronomy is a speech delivered by Moses to the Israelites in an area north of the Dead Sea and east of the River Jordan, on the eve of the people’s crossing of the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan under Joshua’s leadership. The exhortation is driven by the belief that there is no God in heaven and earth other than the God of Israel (4:39).”

“**Keep in mind:** Rather, ‘take to heart.’ Israel should reflect upon the fact that the Lord is the only God and draw the appropriate conclusion...**In heaven above and on earth below:** That God spoke from heaven and acted on earth shows His dominion in both realms. He is God everywhere. The midrash notes that this verse is the most thoroughgoing statement of monotheism in the entire Bible.” (*The JPS Torah Commentary* (JPS), p57) ►

**Ecclesiastes 12:10** ([online tools](#))<sup>(7)</sup>

**10** **The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.**

(*New International Version*) The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

“This epilogue, which refers to Qohelet [the Preacher] in the third person, is no doubt from a later hand. But it is probably from someone who knew and appreciated Qohelet...The epilogue gives some insight into the epilogist’s view of both Qohelet and the book. Qohelet had a reputation both as a sage and as a teacher (Ecclesiastes 12:9).” (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC))

“The role of Solomon as teacher is reaffirmed. Following his example, teachers must go ahead of pupils to seek out the truth and so convey it to their pupils. In addition, a teacher seeks to make his or her words as palatable as possible and teaches in a way that communicates well.” (*The New American Commentary* (NAC), p344) ►

**Ephesians 2:19-22** ([online tools](#))<sup>(21)</sup>

**19** **Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;**

(*Amplified Bible*) Therefore you are no longer outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens), but you now share citizenship with the saints (God’s own people, consecrated and set apart for Himself); and you belong to God’s [own] household.

(*New Living Translation*) So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family.

“**Foreigners** are people outside a country or community, with no special rights or privileges. The word for **aliens** often is translated as ‘sojourners,’ a term that accentuates the transient nature of the Gentiles. In that condition they

were like aliens with an ‘immigrant visa,’ which granted them limited rights and privileges, but not full citizenship or permanent residency. But the status of the gentiles has changed remarkably: First, the author uses a political expression and affirms that they are now **fellow citizens with God’s people**, that is, they are on equal standing with the historic people of God. Second, he uses the imagery of a building to affirm that they are **members of God’s household.**” (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p200)

**20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;**

(*Amplified Bible*) You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself the chief Cornerstone.

(*New Living Translation*) We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

“Verse 20 shifts from household members to the building itself....Christ is portrayed as either a capstone or cornerstone. Apostles and prophets are the foundation....Old Testament texts about the cornerstone in Zion were applied to Jesus. However the capstone held the building together. Its location at the top of an arch also fits Ephesians’ consistent references to the exaltation of Christ. The unity of the initially separate ‘you’ and ‘us’ gains the organic form of a building whose diverse materials must be properly fitted together and held in place by the capstone.” (*Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (ANTC), p75-6)

**21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:**

(*Amplified Bible*) In Him the whole structure is joined (bound, welded) together harmoniously, and it continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord].

“And so it is in him that the building composed of people not only is **joined together**, which means literally to ‘harmonize together’ or to ‘fit together,’ it also **grows**, since it is a dynamic human building in which the growth is ongoing. What the building is becoming is a **holy temple in the Lord**. The Greek word used here for **temple** means the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, where God meets his people. Now, our author says, the church itself is that place of meeting...” (*Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (ACNT), p52)

**22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.**

(*Amplified Bible*) In Him [and in fellowship with one another] you yourselves also are being built up [into this structure] with the rest, to form a fixed abode (dwelling place) of God in (by, through) the Spirit.

“The function of a temple is to be a *dwelling* for God. So the previously alienated and sinful groups have now been *joined together*, stone by stone, so to speak, as a holy temple for the God to whom they have together been reconciled. It is striking that the words for *joined together* and *rises* (literally ‘grows’) occur also in 4:15-16, where they describe the growth not of an inanimate temple but of the church as the living ‘body’ of Christ. God’s ‘dwelling’ with his people is a wonderful reality that began in the Old Testament times...That truth is repeated here, now with the additional emphasis on those who constitute what we might call the building materials.” (*The IVP New Testament Series* (IVP), p76-7) ▶

**Ephesians 4:7,11-13** ([online tools](#)) (20)

**7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Yet grace (God’s unmerited favor) was given to each of us individually [not indiscriminately, but in different ways] in proportion to the measure of Christ’s [rich and bounteous] gift.

“As Christ apportioned it’ is literally ‘according to the measure of the gift of Christ.’ This does not suggest Christ gives only a small amount of grace to some, for he has lavished his grace on us. The identity of the gift is uncertain. It could be grace, the Holy Spirit, or Christ himself. Closer determination is neither possible nor desirable, for to speak of grace is to speak of Christ and the Spirit. The concern is to recognize the God-intended and God-empowered diversity of functions within the body of Christ....What is measured to each one is needed to make the full measure of the body of Christ.” (*The NIV Application Commentary* (NIVAC), p200)

**11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;**

(*Amplified Bible*) And His gifts were [varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us] some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers.

“...the **gifts** of the ascended Christ to believers are endowments of special abilities which will equip them for the Church’s service...The writer then names some of the functions which different people were thus enabled by God to fulfill....There is no word in Ephesians for anyone whose primary function is administration or supervision....**Evangelists**...probably describes those whose special gifts enabled them to take the gospel to those

outside the Church...**pastor** suggests one whose particular abilities were seen rather in caring for those already within the community.” (*New Century Bible Commentary (NCB)*, p149-50)

**12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:**

(*Amplified Bible*) His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church),

“These various forms of ministry were given to the people of God to equip them for the diversity of service which they were to render in the community, so that the community as a whole – ‘the body of Christ’ – would be built up. The three prepositional phrases in this verse are not coordinate one with another, as might be suggested by the RSV rendering; the second and third phrases are dependent on the first, as is indicated by their being introduced by a different preposition from the first.” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)*, p349)

**13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**

(*Amplified Bible*) [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.

“The final goal to which the process of building the body of Christ is to lead is described in terms of attaining ‘to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’. Those given by Christ as ‘ministers’, along with the ‘saints’, render their service so that God’s people might reach this objective, and they are to continue serving *until* it is attained. The verb employed here is used figuratively and means to ‘attain or arrive at a particular state’, with the focus on the end point. Significantly, Christian growth or progress does not occur in isolation, for Paul’s language here envisages God’s people *collectively (we all)* as en route to this vital destination.” (*The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)*, p305) ▶

**Ephesians 6:10,13** ([online tools](#)) (17)

**10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.**

(*Amplified Bible*) In conclusion, be strong in the LORD [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides].

(*JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English*) In conclusion be strong - not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of his boundless resource.

“It is the exercise or manifestation of the might of the Lord that is the source of power for believers. Apart from Christ Christians can accomplish nothing at all...It is therefore, as if Paul were saying, ‘When I urge you to find your source of power in the Lord and in the strength of his might, I am not making an unreasonable request, for you yourselves know that his omnipotence has been revealed by...*marvelous deeds*.’” (*New Testament Commentary (NTC)*, p270)

**13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place].

(*New Living Translation*) Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.

(*New English Bible*) Therefore, take up God’s armour; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand.

“Paul says, as you realize the grim power and resources of our spiritual foes, *take unto you the whole armour of God*. Only at great peril can it be neglected...the great objective of the Christian warrior is to be able to *stand*. In fact the first use of the word in this verse is in the compound verb *withstand*, implying a stand against great opposition. *The evil day*, to which particular reference is made, indicates a time when the conflict will be most severe, due both to persecution from without and trial from within the Christian fellowship....So he stresses here with all the emphasis he can, that *having done all*, having accomplished great things, they must be sure to *stand*.” (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC)*, p173-4) ▶

**Ezekiel 36:28,38** ([online tools](#)) (R)

**28** And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; **and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.**

*(Amplified Bible)* And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

“The result of this new divine initiative is an enabling of the will expressed in the observance of the life-giving commandments; then, at last, the covenant will be a reality: ‘You will be a people for me and I will be God for you’ – a formula of frequent occurrence in Ezekiel....Throughout subsequent history, therefore, it is only a question of God *remembering* his covenant. To the more ancient covenant formulations which concentrate on the promise of land, the priests added the promise of divine presence which, in their view, implied presence in the sanctuary....Here too the promise of land is associated with a reaffirmation of the covenant presence.” *(Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching (IBC), p168)*

**38** As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: **and they shall know that I am the LORD.**

*(Amplified Bible)* Like the flock of holy things for sacrifice, like the flock of Jerusalem in her [solemn] appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know, understand, and realize that I am the Lord [the Sovereign Ruler, Who calls forth loyalty and obedient service].

“To describe the effects of Yahweh’s action, the prophet compares the population of the land with flocks of sheep jamming the streets of Jerusalem at festival time....Yahweh acts on behalf of his holy name by creating for himself a numerous holy people....The flock of Yahweh’s pasture is indeed a human flock. When the nation of Israel fills the ancestral homeland, then they will recognize Yahweh, and his name will have been vindicated within the borders of his own land and among his own people.” *(The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT), p365)* ►

**Ezekiel 37:26** ([online tools](#)) (R)

**26** **Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.**

*(New Living Translation)* And I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give them their land and multiply them, and I will put my Temple among them forever.

“In verses 26-27 there are deliberative echoes of Leviticus 26:4-13...A new element, with respect to Leviticus 26, is ‘an everlasting covenant’, which happily marries a Davidic tradition with the national tradition of the patriarchal covenant. In keeping with the context, the conception that dominates this final stanza is the echoing of the historical period of the united monarchy, which under David and Solomon was closely connected with the centralization of worship in Jerusalem and especially with the building of the temple. That period is visualized as creating an ideal for the future. Emphasis is laid on the restored temple towering over the people as the capstone of the new divine-human constitution that time would not decay.” *(Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), p194)* ►

**Isaiah 45:5,6,8,12,13,18** ([online tools](#)) (RR)

**5** **I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:**

*(The Message)* I am GOD, the only God there is. Besides me there are no real gods. I'm the one who armed you for this work, though you don't even know me,

“God had raised up Cyrus on account of his own people....*I girded thee*: The sense is, I girded thee with the girdle – the military belt; I prepared thee, and strengthened thee for war and conquest. Even men who are strangers to the true God are sustained by him, and are unable to accomplish anything without his providential aid.” *(Notes on the Old and the New Testaments (BARNES), p148)*

**6** **That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.**

*(Amplified Bible)* That men may know from the east and the rising of the sun and from the west and the setting of the sun that there is no God besides Me. I am the Lord, and no one else [is He].

“The basic premise is that Yahweh set in motion the entire process — he incited Cyrus to world conquest to put an end to the Babylonian Empire and restore Judah to its former state. The military power evident in the conquests of Cyrus is placed in the context of the denial of the reality of other deities.” *(The Anchor Bible (AB))*

**8** **Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.**

(*Amplified Bible*) Let fall in showers, you heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness [the pure, spiritual, heaven-born possibilities that have their foundation in the holy being of God]; let the earth open, and let them [skies and earth] sprout forth salvation, and let righteousness germinate and spring up [as plants do] together; I the Lord have created it.

“Verse 8 recalls [Isaiah] 44:23 in making a conclusion and the significance of what it follows, but it is not a hymn of praise but a commission by Yahweh to the cosmos to set about fulfilling the intention that has been announced. Yahweh has **created it**: God’s acts in history for the deliverance of Israel are God’s acts of creation.” (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p263)

**12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.**

(*Contemporary English Version*) I created the world and covered it with people;  
I stretched out the sky and filled it with stars.

“Here praise of God as creator is particularly detailed: he created the heavens and the stars in them, the earth and man upon it. As creator, he is Lord of his creation; he commands the host of the stars. This is the basis of his lordship of history. It is brought into relationship with one particular point, the rousing of Cyrus to set Israel free.” (*The Old Testament Library* (OTL), p168)

**13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.**

(*Amplified Bible*) I will raise [Cyrus] up in righteousness [willing in every way that which is right and proper], and I will direct all his ways; he will build My city, and he will let My captives go, not for hire or for a bribe, says the LORD of hosts.

“Cyrus did not arise by accident, nor by his own choice. He rose up because *I* called him... Kings of the ancient Near East liked to boast that they were right and straight. But here Cyrus’s activities are seen as an expression not of his rightness or straightness, but of God’s!...C.F. Whitley is surely correct when he argues that *righteousness* here refers not to morality but to correctness of action. God insists that he will have done the ‘right’ thing in calling Cyrus....So God says that his decision to use the pagan king in order to accomplish his large creation and election purposes is absolutely the right one in the light of all the circumstances, and that Israel, the object of those purposes, is in no position to challenge the decision.” (*The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (NICOT), p210-11)

**18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.**

(*New Living Translation*) For the LORD is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. "I am the LORD," he says, "and there is no other.

“The disputation begins with a reassertion of the undisputed propositions that Yahweh is sole God and sole creator, and then proceeds to speak of the *purpose* of his act of creation. The word **chaos** is the same as that used in Genesis 1:2, where it is translated in RSV as ‘without form’...its meaning here should be understood in terms of its context and of its meaning elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah, where it designates that which is utterly ineffectual. The creation of the world was not due simply to a divine whim but directed towards a clear and purposeful end: he formed it **to be inhabited** by the human race.” (*New Century Bible Commentary* (NCB), p110-11) ▶

**James 5:14** ([online tools](#)) (11)

**14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:**

(*Amplified Bible*) Is anyone among you sick? He should call in the church elders (the spiritual guides). And they should pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name.

(*Ferrar Fenton Bible*) Is any one among you sick? Let him summon the elders of the assembly; and they will pray over him, applying to him oil with the power of the Lord.

*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC) describes the healing method: “When the elders respond, they do two things. First, they pray for the person. This is the activity that receives the stress by being put first. They call upon God to heal the person; they do not heal by their own virtue. Second, they **anoint** the person **with oil** in the name of the Lord. Though oil was often used as a medicine, this is not presented as a medicinal treatment. Rather, it is an outward and physically perceptible sign of the spiritual power of prayer, as well as a sign of the authority of

the healer. It corresponds to the healing prayer as water does to baptismal prayer. It is done **in the name of the Lord**, for as in baptism, the name of Jesus is invoked in prayer as the power and authority of the act.”

“*Are any of you sick?* This is the third situation that calls for a response of prayer....The elders to whom James refers are those who exercise leadership roles within the community. Functionaries such as elders, or *presbyteroi* were a reality that can be traced throughout the Hebrew, Jewish, and Hellenistic worlds. Elders exercised roles as community leaders within the different organizational groupings of the social world of Judaism....Essentially, then, an elder was not an office bearer, but a functionary who exercised within the community traditional leadership roles that were derived from the heads of households....They are to ‘pray over’ the sick person. The elders also anoint the sick person with oil.” (*Sacra Pagina* (SP), p266-7) ►

**Job 32:8** ([online tools](#)) (8)

**8** But *there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.*

(*Amplified Bible*) But there is [a vital force] a spirit [of intelligence] in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives men understanding.

(*New Jerusalem Bible*) There is, you see, a spirit residing in humanity, the breath of God conferring intelligence.

(*New Living Translation*) Surely it is God's Spirit within people, the breath of the Almighty within them, that makes them intelligent.

“Elihu, who has undergone none of Job’s afflictions, claims to be able to interpret them by virtue of a common human spirit, the breath of Shaddai within him. The spirit, however, is clearly more than mere breath; it is that force which gives insight and understanding... Accordingly, the Hebrew *ruah hi*’ in verse 8 may be rendered ‘her spirit’ or ‘she is the spirit.’ *Hi*’ (it/she) could be taken simply as a reference back to spirit and the idiom be translated ‘it is the spirit.’ But in view of Elihu’s overall argument justifying his case for inner knowledge, it seems preferable to identify the antecedent *hi*’ as ‘wisdom’...Elihu claims that the ‘spirit’ within is his source of wisdom; ‘she’ is the very spirit that animates humans.” (*The Old Testament Library* (OTL), p451) ►

**Matthew 9:35** ([online tools](#)) (5)

**35** And **Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.**

(*Amplified Bible*) And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news (the Gospel) of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and every weakness and infirmity.

“The summary occurs again here in order once more to state the essence of the ministry of Jesus ....‘Jesus went about all the cities and the villages,’ shows that Matthew, like the other evangelists, has only given a representative sampling of the words and deeds of Jesus. The word ‘all’ here, as in its occurrences at the end of the verse, is again hyperbolic and symbolic. The healing ministry of Jesus to which Matthew has just devoted so much attention and space in his Gospel is once more considered secondary to the prior references to teaching and proclaiming.... At the heart of all the words and deeds of Jesus is ‘the gospel of the kingdom’.” (*Word Biblical Commentary* (WBC), p259-60) ►

**Matthew 16:13-18** ([online tools](#)) (6)

**13** **When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**

(*Amplified Bible*) Now when Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

PRONUNCIATION: “Caesarea Philippi (ses’uh-ree’uh-fil-ip’i\ or ses’uh-ree’uh-fil’i-pi\),” (*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (HBD)). [Audio»](#)

MAP: “Caesarea Philippi,” [BibleAtlas.org»](#)

“*Caesarea Philippi*: Located on the southern slope of Mount Hermon at one of the sources of the Jordan River, the site in antiquity was known as a shrine to the god Pan. The Roman emperor Augustus gave the city to Herod the Great. When Herod’s son Philip rebuilt the city, he changed its name from Panion to Caesarea Philippi (after the emperor and himself)....*that the Son of Man is*:...Here Matthew uses ‘Son of Man’ as a way of talking about Jesus. It functions as a title connected with the many other instances of ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospel, not as a generic term or simply as a personal pronoun.” (*Sacra Pagina* (SP), p247)

**14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.**

*(The Message)* They replied, "Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

"It is significant that all four answers reflect the popular view that Jesus is a spokesman for God. Those who heard him had no doubt that his was a message with supernatural authority. In Jewish apocalyptic the reappearance of famous individuals prior to the arrival of the Messiah was common...Through Malachi, God promises, 'I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes'. From Matthew 11:14 and 17:10-13 we learn that John the Baptist was interpreted as Elijah returned from the dead. Elijah was in many ways the greatest of the prophets, and Jeremiah was often listed first among the latter prophets in the Jewish Bible." (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p160)

**15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?**

*(Amplified Bible)* He said to them, But who do you [yourselves] say that I am?

"In the original enormous stress is placed on 'But you.' This personal pronoun, second person plural, stands at the very head of the question. It appears first as a word all by itself, and is then included again as an element in the verb...The people all around us may have their various opinions about Jesus, but what do *we* think of him? That is the question. It must be borne in mind that this question had been addressed to all these men, not just to one of them;.... Accordingly when *one* of the Twelve now answer it, he does so as the spokesman for the entire group, and the answer which Jesus gives him must therefore also be regarded as not being altogether without significance for the group." (*New Testament Commentary* (NTC), p642-3)

**16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

*(Ferrar Fenton Bible)* Then Simon Peter, replying, said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

"Peter answers as spokesman for the Twelve, who had been addressed collectively. Here is the first time in Matthew that anyone in Jesus' audiences has unambiguously acknowledged him as the 'Christ'. Peter immediately adds the title 'Son of God' as in [Matthew] 14:33, where all the disciples had acclaimed Jesus with this form of address. Apparently, Peter now has a deeper appreciation for Jesus' unique relationship with the Father....Peter also adds the adjective 'living,' a characteristically Jewish way of referring to God to distinguish him from lifeless idols and also a reminder that only Yahweh has life in himself which he can impart to others." (*The New American Commentary* (NAC), p250-1)

**17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**

*(JB Phillips New Testament in Modern English)* "Simon, son of Jonah, you are a fortunate man indeed!" said Jesus, "for it was not your own nature but my Heavenly Father who has revealed this truth to you!"

"Peter did not receive his revelation from *man*, literally 'flesh and blood,' a common expression for 'mortals' or 'humans'. Peter's understanding of Jesus' identity came by divine revelation, undoubtedly including God's revelation through Jesus' miraculous acts. This revelation of Jesus' identity was foundational for God's purposes in history." (*The IVP New Testament Series* (IVP), p270)

**18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

*(Amplified Bible)* And I tell you, you are Peter [Greek, Petros--a large piece of rock], and on this rock [Greek, petra--a huge rock like Gibraltar] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it [or be strong to its detriment or hold out against it].

"Jesus bestows on Peter a new name, and immediately begins to expound the meaning of that name, as he declares, **On this rock I will build my church.** It is vital to note that the gift of the new name has nothing to do with any solid, rocklike, or unflinching features in Peter's personality. In fact Peter is fully capable of base misunderstanding as well as astonishing confession, so he is addressed in rapid succession both as foundation rock and as stone causing others to stumble....Peter stands forth among the Twelve as their representative, and on behalf of all he utters the good confession. And in him Jesus sees the whole future community of disciples and confessors." (*Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (ACNT), p200-1) ▶

**Psalm 27:5** ([online tools](#)) (2)

**5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.**



(*Amplified Bible*) For in the day of trouble He will hide me in His shelter; in the secret place of His tent will He hide me; He will set me high upon a rock.

(*New Living Translation*) For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

(*New English Bible*) For he will keep me safe beneath his roof in the day of misfortune; he will hide me under the cover of his tent; he will raise me beyond reach of distress.

“The OT makes mention of inquiring of the Lord before battle. The king anticipates finding protection for himself and his people in the ‘dwelling,’ i.e., the ‘tabernacle,’ of God! With this assurance he knows that he is in God’s protective hands. He further likens this protection by being placed ‘high upon a rock.’ God is that rock for those who trust in him.” (*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (EBC), p245) [▶](#)

### **Psalm 77:13** ([online tools](#)) (G)

#### **13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?**

(*Amplified Bible*) Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary [in holiness, away from sin and guilt]. Who is a great God like our God?

*In the sanctuary*) Elsewhere the KJV translates the Hebrew noun *qodesh*, “holiness,” as *The Exploring Series* (EXS) does here. i.e., “in holiness.” “God always acts in strict accordance with His holiness. It is not that God has forgotten his lovingkindness; it is simply that His love and His holiness always work in complete harmony. This is what explains so many of life’s mysterious disciplines — both individual and national.”

“Is holy, literally ‘is in holiness,’ not as others, ‘in the sanctuary,’ for the Psalmist, though speaking generally of God’s redeeming love and power, is evidently thinking chiefly of the deliverance from Egypt, on which he afterwards dwells. In this and the next verse, there is an allusion to Exodus 15:11, ‘Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?’” (Perowne, JJ Steward, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989, repr of 1878, p51) [▶](#)

### **Psalm 96:1,3,4,5,6** ([online tools](#)) (1)

#### **1 O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.**

(*The Message*) Sing GOD a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing!

“‘New song’ occurs seven times in the Hebrew Bible...Typically, the new song contains an invitation to behold the wondrous actions of Yahweh and respond with worship. The phrase ‘new song’ does not mean, as it would in English, an original melody and words. It is rather a response to a new divine act; ‘new’ refers to the act it celebrates. Further, the act is not ‘brand new’ and unprecedented but a renewing or reviving of an act of the past.” (*Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (ANTC), p121)

#### **3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.**

(*Contemporary English Version*) Tell every nation on earth, “The [Lord] is wonderful and does marvelous things!

“*Recount among the nations his glory, among all the people his wonders.* The use of *glory*, to denote the special manifestation of God’s attributes, is a characteristic feature of Isaiah’s later prophecies. To preclude all doubt as to the extent of the invitation, the *ambiguous* expression *all the earth*, in verse 1, is here explained to mean *the nations*, and then still more absolutely *all the peoples*.” (Alexander, JA, *Psalms*, New York: Scribner Armstrong & Co., 1873, p397)

#### **4 For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.**

(*Amplified Bible*) For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be reverently feared and worshiped above all [so-called] gods.

(*New Jerusalem Bible*) Great is Yahweh, worthy of all praise, more awesome than any of the gods.

“The Psalmist has in his eye the gross delusions of the heathen, who impiously fashioned gods to themselves. Before refuting their absurd notions, he very properly remarks of God that he is *great, and greatly to be praised* – insinuating that his glory as the infinite One far excels any which they dreamt of as attaching to their idols. We cannot but notice the confidence with which the Psalmist asserts the glory of the true God, in opposition to the universal opinion which men might entertain.” (*Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* (CALVIN), p51)

#### **5 For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.**

(*Amplified Bible*) For all the gods of the nations are [lifeless] idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

“The chief evidence given for Yahweh’s superiority and worthiness lies in his works: **the Lord made the heavens.** Yahweh has done something significant; these ‘nonentities’ have not. The OT consistently argues for monotheism

not on metaphysical grounds but on the grounds of a deity's words and acts. Heavenly bodies were particularly favorite objects of worship in the ancient Near East." (*New International Bible Commentary* (NIBC), p376)

**6 Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

(*God's Word*) Splendor and majesty are in his presence. Strength and beauty are in his holy place.

(*Contemporary English Version*) Give honor and praise to the [Lord], whose power and beauty fill his holy temple."

"In contrast to 'idols' and their nothingness, the court of Yahweh – heavenly beings and angel – is not the object of human worship, but the greatness of the king is adorned with four 'concrete' abstractions, graded in ascending order: from honor and majesty to strength and beauty. These four aspects are to be found in the innermost room of the temple of Zion. Beauty is the highest quality, but like 'glory' it goes far beyond the temple and its ceremonial, for it points...to the final hope of creation and therefore history." (*Eerdmans Critical Commentary* (ECC), p676) ▶

**Psalm 133:1** ([online tools](#)) (18)

**1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!**

(*New Living Translation*) How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live together in harmony!

"Kinfolk are literally siblings, but the term applies to members of extended families and thus village communities; 'living as one' would be a desirable feature of a village's life....Thus living as one suggests both physical proximity and harmony....'Good' hints that something is not only right and proper but also delightful or good-looking; this is part of the point of the repeated reflections in Genesis 1. 'Lovely' then does not so much add a different quality to 'good' as nuance it; one is to expect that the good will be lovely." (*Baker Commentary on the Old Testament* (BCOT), p565-6) ▶

**Psalm 150:1,2** ([online tools](#)) (4)

**1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.**

(*Amplified Bible*) PRAISE THE Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the heavens of His power!

(*New Living Translation*) Praise the LORD! Praise God in his heavenly dwelling; praise him in his mighty heaven!

"**Praise God:**...The other imperative calls to magnify Yahweh begin with 'Praise him'; this may imply that 'Praise the Lord' at the beginning and at the end of the Psalm, is a later liturgical addition. **In his sanctuary:** The reference may be either to the Jerusalem Temple, or to Yahweh's dwelling place in Heaven. If the parallelism in verse 1 is synonymous, then the latter alternative is the right interpretation; it seems that verse 1 describes not the place where God is to be praised but rather the 'place' where he dwells. On the other hand, the Temple is a symbol of the heavenly dwelling of God, and therefore both are closely associated....In this verse 'firmament' is simply a synonym for 'heavens'." (*New Century Bible Commentary* (NCB), p955-6)

**2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.**

(*New English Bible*) praise him for his mighty works, praise him for his immeasurable greatness.

"The reference is to that which displays the *power* of God; the things which manifest his omnipotence. *Praise him according to his excellent greatness.* Hebrew, the *multitude* of his greatness. Let the praise in elevation *correspond* with this; let it be such as shall properly *express* this; let all be employed that will contribute to make this known, or that will be appropriate to this. Hence the psalmist proceeds to call on all to make use of everything, by instrument and voice, that would in any manner set forth the praise of God." (*Notes on the Old and the New Testaments* (BARNES), p340) ▶

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